

1 I Claim:

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3 1. A method for distributing digital data to a plurality of remote sites

4 each having a processing device and a display device, comprising:

5 generating a first set of digital data;

6 encoding each of a plurality of portable read-only storage devices with said

7 first set of digital data;

8 distributing said plurality of storage devices to said plurality of remote sites;

9 providing a database containing a second set of digital data and means for

10 remotely communicating with said sites using a bi-directional channel;

11 said first set of digital data comprising a plurality of regular displayable items,

12 a plurality of formatting codes, a plurality of special displayable terms, a first non-

13 displayable symbol, a plurality of linkage references, and a second non-displayable

14 symbol, said special displayable terms being highlighted when displayed by said

15 display device, said first non-displayable symbol being used by said processing device

16 for recognizing said displayable terms, said second non-displayable symbol being used

17 by said processing device for recognizing said plurality of linkage references, each of

18 said plurality of linkage references being used for retrieving a portion of said second

19 set of digital data, and each of said plurality of special displayable terms being

20 associated with one of said plurality of linkage references;

1 said means for communicating comprising means for accepting at least one of
2 said linkage references transmitted by at least one of said sites using said bi-directional
3 channel;
4 searching, by said database, for a portion of said second set of digital data
5 referenced by said at least one linkage reference; and
6 sending, by said database, said portion to said at least one site via said bi-
7 directional channel.

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9 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said first set of digital data is
10 encrypted.

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12 3. The method of claim ¹/₁ wherein said storage devices are CDROMs.

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14 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said storage devices are optically
15 encoded storage devices.

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17 5. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of said plurality of
18 displayable items contains text-based characters.

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20 6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of periodically
21 updating parts of said second set of digital data.

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1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein said each of said plurality of special
2 displayable terms are enclosed between a pair of said first non-displayable symbol and
3 each of said plurality of linkage references are enclosed between a pair of said second
4 non-displayable symbols

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6 8. An information distribution system for distributing digital data to be
7 displayed in a plurality of remote sites each having a processing device and a display
8 device, comprising:

9 a plurality of portable read-only storage devices each encoded with a first set
10 of digital data, said storage devices being distributed to said plurality of remote sites;

11 a database containing a second set of digital data and means for remotely
12 communicating with said sites using a bi-directional channel;

13 said first set of digital data comprising a plurality of regular displayable items,

14 a plurality of formatting codes, a plurality of special displayable terms, a first non-
15 displayable symbol, a plurality of linkage references, and a second non-displayable

16 symbol, said special displayable terms being highlighted when displayed by said

17 display device, said first non-displayable symbol being used by said processing device

18 for recognizing said displayable terms, said second non-displayable symbol being used

19 by said processing device for recognizing said plurality of linkage references, each of

20 said plurality of linkage references being used for retrieving a portion of said second

21 set of digital data, and each of said plurality of special displayable terms being

22 associated with one of said plurality of linkage references;

1 said means for communicating comprising means for accepting at least one of
2 said linkage references delivered by at least one of said sites; and
3 means in said database for searching for a portion of said second set of digital
4 data referenced by said at least one linkage reference and for sending said portion to
5 said at least one site via said bi-directional channel.
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7 9. The system of claim 8 wherein said storage devices are CDROMs.
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9 10. The system of claim 8 wherein said read-only storage devices are
10 optically encoded storage devices.

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12 11. The system of claim 8 wherein at least one of said special displayable
13 terms contains text-based characters.
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15 12. The system of claim 8 further comprising means for periodically
16 updating parts of said second set of digital data.
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18 13. The system of claim 8 wherein each of said plurality of special
19 displayable terms are enclosed between a pair of said first non-displayable symbol and
20 each of said plurality of linkage references are enclosed between a pair of said second
21 non-displayable symbol.
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